A CHARGE,

Theology vol 100.

DELIVERED AT A

MEETING

OF THE

SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE,

On TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 1789,

To the Rev. A. T. CLARKE,

APPOINTED, AND THEN GOING, MISSIONARY TO THE EAST-INDIES,

By the REV. R. P. FINCH, D.D.

PREBENDARY OF WESTMINSTER, AND TREASURER TO THE SOCIETY.

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With the Rev. Mr. CLARKE's REPLY.

PRINTED IN THE YEAR MDCCLXXXIX.

CHARGE, &c.

REVEREND BROTHER, BELOVED IN THE LORD,

THAT ſacred and moſt intereſting Undertaking, in which you have embarked, cannot but impreſs my Mind with a Fullneſs of ſympathetic Feeling.

It is, indeed, impoſſible, if we think, under the Influence of Humanity, in one View, or are actuated in another by the Power of Evangelical Faith, to avoid participating in that Diverſity of Effect which ariſes from the Perils you have to encounter, and the abundant Satisfaction, which is the natural Reſult of your devoting yourſelf to the Cauſe of CHRIST.

The Enlargement of HIS KINGDOM, and the everlaſting Happineſs of its Subjects, are the great Points, to the Accompliſhment of which the Aims of this SOCIETY have long been directed; and it is a Reflection full of Comfort and Encouragement, that the divine Bleſſing hath moſt viſibly attended their diffuſive Exertions.

Contracted in its Compaſs, as Chriſtianity at preſent ſeems to be, in Compariſon of the Extent of the known World, it is, undoubtedly, deſigned that it ſhall, under the Direction of infinite Wiſdom, be progreſſively ſpreading until it becomes univerſal; untill the Earth ſhall be full of the Knowledge of the LORD, as the Waters cover the Sea, and all the Ends of it ſhall experience the Salvation of GOD.

To take a Part in this glorious Work, and to aſſiſt in opening a Door of Faith to the Gentiles, to commu-

nicate Goſpel Light to the ignorant Heathens, to reſcue them from that Darkneſs and Diſtreſs, in which they are involved, and to inſtate them in the glorious Liberty of the Children of GOD, is therefore an Attempt, not only gratifying to the beſt Affections of the human Heart; but it is enforced by abundant Sanction from Scripture Authority, eſpecially from Prophecies already fulfilled, now fulfilling, and to be fulfilled hereafter, when that predictive Declaration of our DIVINE REDEEMER ſhall be comprehenſively verified in its aſtoniſhing and delightful Effects. OTHER SHEEP I HAVE, WHICH ARE NOT OF THIS FOLD; THEM ALSO I MUST BRING, AND THEY SHALL HEAR MY VOICE; AND THERE SHALL BE ONE FOLD AND ONE SHEPHERD. Hence it was, inſpired with an awful Proſpect of this grand Event, that the SOCIETY, encouraged and inſtigated by Royal Example in another Proteſtant Country*, turned their Thoughts to a Proviſion for Miſſionaries to the *Eaſt-Indies*; where they too well knew the vaſt Compaſs of the Regions of Darkneſs in a ſpiritual View, and could not therefore be inſenſible to the urgent Calls of Compaſſion in Behalf of the numberleſs Captives of Idolatry, Superſtition, and Errour.

Unable, from Impediments of different Kinds, to find a Supply of Perſons qualified, and ready for this arduous Service, at Home, they have hitherto availed themſelves of the good Offices of ſuch as have been recommended in Germany from Men of the moſt reſpectable Name, and under the Sanction of the beſt authenticated Teſtimonials, in Reſpect to both Literature, and Chriſtian Conduct.

From this fertile Source of Accommodation the moſt ſubſtantial Advantages have been derived to our Deſigns, and to the common Cauſe of pure and undefiled Religion. The Succeſſes of its Advocates, however various and unequal, have, in general, been ſufficient to evince the Earneſtneſs of their Endeavours, and,

* Denmark.

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in ſome Inſtances, ſo ſignal as to diſtinguiſh moſt remarkably that Merit, which reſults from a wiſely directed Zeal, and to ſtamp upon their Names ſuch Marks of Applauſe, as the Records of Gratitude ought faithfully to preſerve.

ONE, in particular, in this Liſt of Chriſtian Heroes is ſo very illuſtrious, that we may as well attempt to deprive Virtue of its Charms, or Religion of its ſuperiour Lovelineſs, as to ſeparate the Name of SWARTZ from good Report, I had almoſt ſaid, from Apoſtolic Praiſe.

It has been the Surprize of many, and the Lamentation of more, that Fortitude thus exemplified, ſhould not have inſpired ſome of our own Clergy with an Emulation to follow and to imitate theſe Champions of the Croſs, thus ſeeking, and thus contending TO SAVE THEM WHO ARE LOST.

But, when we conſider the different Circumſtances and Situations of Men, and of Things, the different Modes of training and Education, the different Habits, Connections, and Proſpects of Life, and that what may be a competent Support for one is not ſo for another, whatever Ground there may be for Sorrow, that a Work ſo neceſſary, and ſo glorious, ſhould be ſeemingly ſlighted, there is little Cauſe for Wonder.

We are told upon an Authority not to be controverted, that they, who preach the Goſpel, ſhould live of the Goſpel, and that the Workman has, in this View, an undoubted Right to Reward. Now, if when Hardſhips of the ſevereſt Sort were ſubmitted to for the Sake of planting and propagating eternal Truth, this was inſiſted upon as ordained by GOD Himſelf, it cannot be expected, in quite another State of Things, that Human Nature ſhould not recoil at a Thought of worldly Diſtreſs.

To convince us, however, that common Diſcouragements have not always the ſame Operation, and that

no Perils, not even ſuch as St. Paul deſcribes, can damp the Ardour of Chriſtian Faith, You, my Reverend Brother, have devoted yourſelf, with a Firmneſs of laudable Reſolution, to execute the final Commiſſion of your Lord and Maſter to His Apoſtles.

Such a Principle of Exertion we muſt applaud, confiding not merely in the Fervency, but in the Purity, the Sincerity, the Moderation of your Zeal. The beneficial Exerciſe, and ſucceſsful Influence of which will depend upon a Combination of ſuch Virtues and Qualities as theſe, Application, Diligence, Circumſpection, Conſiſtency, and Self-command. All which muſt, in the Courſe of your paſtoral Conduct, be harmoniouſly preſerved, as from the Nature of your Situation, and the Calls of your Office, none of them can be diſcontinued without extreme Injury to others, and certain Diſhonour to yourſelf. But we are perſuaded better Things of You, and Things which accompany Salvation; and, therefore, I do not ſpeak as having Authority, but as an humble Inſtrument of that Edification for which it is our common Wiſh and our united Aim to provide. A Proviſion, we truſt, which cannot be made with greater Probability of Succeſs than, in Addition to that only INFALLIBLE GUIDE, THE BIBLE, a conſcientious Adherence to the Doctrine and Diſcipline of our eſtabliſhed Church, that Bulwark of Proteſtantiſm, that illuſtrious Ornament of the Chriſtian Name. Which, too ſenſible of the Imperfections attending the correcteſt human Syſtems, boaſts not of Infallibility, but boaſts of a Purity, a Solidity, a well connected Order, a ritual and ceremonial Inſtitution, equally removed from the Glare of Pageantry, and the Aukwardneſs of Neglect. If its Doctrines, or its Diſcipline, have been at any Time unfavourably repreſented, it probably aroſe from invidious Malevolence, partial Information, or enthuſiaſtic Bias, by which we too well know the Beauty of Holineſs, the Scripture of Truth itſelf, hath been by Men of perverſe Minds defiled and deformed.

Should it happen that you are put to any Trial with Reſpect to either, avail yourſelf ſtedfaſtly of your Knowledge

Knowledge of, and your Veneration and Eſteem for theſe, and being poſſeſſed of that ſecureſt of all Armour, the SHIELD OF FAITH AND THE HELMET OF SALVATION, bid Defiance to every Aſſault under the Influence of that Strength which will be made perfect in your Weakneſs.

It is poſſible you may, under certain Circumſtances, be expoſed to Diſputation with Men of ſtrong Prejudices and deeply rooted Diſguſt. Of this be as wary as Prudence itſelf can make you, keeping conſtantly in Mind with a uniform View to its Application in each Part, that Admonition of Him, who ſpake as never Man ſpake, BE YE WISE AS SERPENTS AND HARMLESS AS DOVES. But, ſhould Neceſſity, or the Credit of your Profeſſion, provoke you to ſuch Engagement, guard againſt two very hazardous, and, in the View of Religion, not juſtifiable Weapons of Defence, I mean, ſarcaſtical Bitterneſs and wanton Ridicule, which ſhould have no Place, where ſolid Reaſoning, ſound Argument, and clear Evidence are in the Courſe of Debate the only proper and ſatisfactory Means of Support. Severity or Banter, though applied with all the Brilliancy of Wit, can never anſwer the Purpoſe in Things ſerious and ſacred, nor can they be conſiſtent with that MEEKNESS OF WISDOM, which is eſſential, in every Part of Conduct, to the Character and Succeſs of a Miniſter of CHRIST.

This is noticed as an incidental, not as the direct Object of your Concern. THAT is a more ſubſtantial Part of Duty; the moſt exalted Act of Compaſſion upon Earth. It is to open the blind eyes, to break off the Yoke of diabolic Tyranny from the Necks of Mankind, to bring them over from the Infatuations of Idolatry to the Worſhip of the ONE TRUE GOD, to free the Mind from Perſuaſions early imbibed and long poſſeſſed, to eradicate a Fondneſs for Opinions founded in the Corruption of Nature, and cheriſhed by an artful Management of its Affections and Paſſions, to reclaim the Vi-

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tious and Diſſolute, to awaken in the torpid Soul a juſt Senſe of its Obligations, and Proſpects, and eternal Good. This is no trifling Employment, nor conſiſtent with inglorious Eaſe; but requires the utmoſt Exertions which the moſt determined and beſt directed Reſolution can inſpire or ſupport.

This is a faint Sketch of thoſe Difficulties and Trials, which the faithful Embaſſadors of our REDEEMER muſt, in opening the Kingdom of Heaven, and conciliating its Intereſts to Infidels, expect to encounter. But formidable as they may ſeem, the Armour of Righteouſneſs, the Sword of the Spirit, the Protection and Co-operation of the Providence and the Grace of GOD, certainly, however inviſibly, like the Wind which bloweth where it liſteth, are far more than equal to all theſe Powers of Darkneſs.

You will remember, and exult in that Remembrance, that though an Hoſt of Enemies ſhould be at Hand, greater is He who is in you than He who is in the World. It is the Aſſurance of your SAVIOUR, of Him, whoſe victorious Death and triumphant Reſurrection ſtamp infallible Authority upon all His Conſolations, IN THE WORLD YE SHALL HAVE TRIBULATION, BUT BE OF GOOD CHEER, I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD. And, to induce his Friends, as He condeſcendingly calls them, who keep his Word, to do ſo too, I AM WITH YOU ALWAY, EVEN UNTO THE END OF IT, by the Guidance of His Spirit, by the Protection of His Power, by the Efficacy of His Word; by an Agency, which is ſuperior to all Controul, as will, under the Direction of ſupreme Wiſdom, be manifeſted to Men and Angels in the Conſummation of His Kingdom.

Promiſes and Predictions thus proceeding from Him, who is aſcended into that Glory, which He had ESSENTIALLY with the Father before the World was, are, ſurely, ſufficient to inſpire the Soul with Cheerfulneſs, with Confidence, with Rapture in the midſt of whatever Diſtreſſes may ariſe.

But

But they ſhould never lead to enthuſiaſtic Preſumption, nor to any unguarded Acts. The good Soldier of JESUS CHRIST, who goes forth under the Banner of Salvation, ſhould be firm, but not raſh; reſolved, but not violent; watchful to improve, but not haſty to hazard Opportunities; prepared to reſiſt fiery Darts, but not eager to provoke them: Nor ſhould He, whilſt He is actuated by a Solicitude to preſerve the Soul, ever think of calling down Fire from Heaven, or treating harſhly either the Perſons or Reputations of Men.

CHARITY is the End of the Commandment, and can never but by unnatural Force be ſeparated from the Conduct of a Chriſtian Believer. It is the grand CHARACTERISTIC of our Profeſſion, and if we ſacrifice that to Animoſity in any View, our Pretenſions are forfeited, and our Expectations will be vain, as to the good Influence, however fervent it may be, of our Zeal.

It remains only that I entreat your Attention to theſe few but important Points; that, beſides, in the Courſe of your Miniſtry, and the Inculcation of your Doctrine, maintaining Gravity, Sincerity, and ſound Speech, you take Care in your Communication with the World never to deſecrate profeſſional Dignity, either by countenancing popular Licentiouſneſs on the one Hand, or by an Affectation of rigid Moroſeneſs on the other; but evince by your Example that inoffenſive Cheerfulneſs and religious Rule are perfectly conſiſtent; that, even in external Circumſtances of Habit and Dreſs you preſerve Propriety; for whatever diminiſhes your Conſequence, as unfit Appearances and Compliances will, muſt be a Check upon your Influence, and an Interruption of your Progreſs in effecting the Ends of your Appointment; that you make your general Converſation with Mankind ſubſervient to the Ends and Aims of your Miſſion, marking with Exactneſs whatever may apply with Advantage to the Circulation of divine Truth; that you communicate freely, and without Reſerve, in your Correſpondence with Us,

whatever

whatever may be of Moment in itſelf, or in its Conſequences productive of GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, ſtrictly avoiding all Deviation from Truth or Exaggeration of Facts to ſerve ſiniſter Purpoſes, or to gratify ſpiritual Conceit: All which, you will recollect, not only Chriſtianity abhors, but the Church of England diſdains; that you adhere ſtrenuouſly to the reſtraining and eradicating predominant Libertiniſm, and to the infuſing a Fulneſs of Conſolation into the humble and contrite Heart; that you pay an eſpecial Regard, as you find Opportunity, to the riſing Generation, and conſider it as a moſt ſubſtantial Service done to the Chriſtian Cauſe; for, in this View of Things, it may perhaps be ſaid with peculiar Propriety, OF SUCH IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD; that you intermix no Stratagems or Contrivances as Lures to Converſion, nor endeavour to conciliate Prejudice by Expedients, which are inconſiſtent with the Sanctity, and unlikely to lead to the Attainment of ſaving Truth; but, relying upon the Charms of Goſpel Motives, and upon the Power of Goſpel Sanctions, commend yourſelf to every one's Conſcience in the Sight of God.

Your Plan being thus fixed, and your Reſolution ſtedfaſtly formed, you may go on your Way rejoicing in Hope, whilſt we continue inſtant in Prayer to the Father of Mercies, not only for your Proſperity, but that, knowing well the Neceſſity and Opportunity for ſuch Employment, the Spatiouſneſs of the Field, and the Scantineſs of Hands for Cultivation, HE WILL SEND FORTH, under the Auſpices of Wealth, and Power, and public Countenance, MORE LABOURERS INTO HIS HARVEST; who may each, as we truſt will be your Caſe, when this Work is ſucceſsfully done, apply to Himſelf that triumphant Exclamation of St. Paul, I HAVE FOUGHT A GOOD FIGHT, I HAVE FINISHED MY COURSE, I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH; HENCEFORTH THERE IS LAID UP FOR ME A CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH THE LORD, THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE, SHALL GIVE TO ME, AND NOT TO ME ONLY, BUT TO ALL THEM ALSO, WHO, from a juſt

a juſt Reliance upon His Merits, and a Conſciouſneſs of Fidelity IN His Service, LOVE His APPEARING.

To which Mr. *Clarke* made the following Reply:

REVEREND SIR,

THE Situation in which I now find, and feel myſelf, and the Connection to which I have, through the kind Recommendation of a Right Reverend Prelate* and other moſt benevolent Friends, been introduced, cannot but inſpire my Heart with very penetrating Impreſſions of Obligation and Duty.

An earneſt Deſire on my Part to embark in the Service, and to promote, to the utmoſt of my Abilities, the Deſigns of this VENERABLE BODY, more particularly in one Branch of their moſt charitable Concern for the SPIRITUAL WELFARE of Mankind, has been attended with ſuch a Concurrence of favourable Circumſtances and Aids, as exceeds the moſt ſanguine Wiſh I could form.

Your Sympathy, Reverend Sir, as a ſteady and very earneſt Friend, and that of the Society at large, I have no doubt I do already, and ſhall in future moſt ſubſtantially and beneficially experience. GOD grant it may be in a Fulneſs of my miniſterial Succeſs, and that the Name of JESUS CHRIST, and all the Intereſts of that Kingdom of Righteouſneſs, which it is our united Endeavour to ſupport, propagate, and extend more and more, may produce abundant HOSANNAS from them who now lie in Darkneſs and in the Shadow of Death!

It is not my Wiſh to enlarge upon any Circumſtances relative to myſelf, ſuch as my leaving my native Coun-

* The Lord Biſhop of Lincoln.

try,

try, Relations, Friends, and Connections behind me,—but rather to keep in View the glorious Work of diſſeminating the Truths of the Goſpel, and BRINGING OTHER SHEEP INTO THE FOLD OF CHRIST, that his Name may be glorified among the GENTILES.

To this End, and that moſt deſirable one, wherever it may be attained, of reclaiming the Wicked, and giving Comfort to the Righteous, (although I may be ſubjected to Trials beyond thoſe of common Experience,) my conſtant Endeavour ſhall be, under the protecting Government of the good and wiſe Providence of God, to endure unto the End.

The inſtructive Admonitions which I have now, with ſuch an Attention as the Importance of them demands, committed to my Remembrance, ſhall be hereafter faithfully applied to the Regulation of my Conduct, which will, I truſt, evince in all its Parts, that my Gratitude to this VENERABLE SOCIETY has under all Circumſtances its free and uninterrupted Influence.

It would, indeed, be ſtrange, or rather unnatural, if I ſhould deviate from ſo deſirable a Path, ſo clearly deſcribed, or neglect in any ſingle Inſtance to purſue and cultivate the great End and Object of my own Wiſh, and your moſt laudable, becauſe moſt ſacred, Aim.

All, therefore, which at preſent I can give, in Compenſation for Favours and Obligations conferred upon me, in Conſequence of the Relation with which I am honored, is a ſolemn Aſſurance of devoting myſelf entirely and heartily to the Service of our heavenly Lord and Maſter, and that whatever Diſtance Earth or Ocean may make between us, neither Space nor Time ſhall obliterate my Regard for YOURSELVES and for your INTERESTS—INTERESTS which are inſeparable from that LOVE OF GOD which we have freely received, and ought freely to communicate in CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.